

## AMERICAS FIRST: SHARED VISIONS AND SHARED THREATS

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**AMERICAS FIRST: SHARED VISIONS AND SHARED THREATS**

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

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Pursuit of U.S. interests in Latin America and the Caribbean has frequently resulted in suboptimal outcomes for both parties. Prosecution of the long Cold War and Drug War in the region, when the U.S. too hastily or austere transitioned from a military focus back to diplomatic, informational or economic ones, has empowered leaders who serve the interests of neither country well. Assuming that the War on Terror will be another long war, that illicit drug traffic from Latin America and the Caribbean will continue, and that increasingly violent criminal activity is expanding, the U.S. has a new opportunity and a compelling need to avoid the usual poor outcomes. The key to future success resides in the ability of both sides to identify and focus on shared national interests. The increasingly comprehensive current bilateral U.S.-Colombia and U.S.-Mexico relationships offer an example of a promising way ahead.





## AMERICAS FIRST: SHARED VISIONS AND SHARED THREATS

Nearly two centuries ago, with the promulgation of the Monroe Doctrine in 1823, countries in the western hemisphere south of the United States, (referred to in this SRP as Latin America and the Caribbean [LAC]), came to the collective attention of the U.S. Since then, the importance the U.S. has placed on its LAC relationships, collectively and bilaterally, in terms of effort and material resources has waxed and waned. These fluctuations in U.S. policy were very evident when the LAC region competed only with U.S. domestic issues for the attention of the government. It is also true in a relative sense when LAC vied for Washington's attention together with other regions that presented more compelling concerns. The results for the U.S. and LAC have been mixed, no matter whether the U.S. chose to focus on the region or focused its efforts and resources elsewhere.

Two observations should become clear with the historical examples in the next two sections: First, variations in the degree and type of efforts and resources the U.S. has devoted to the region can be explained by the degree to which domestic issues or foreign policy and security interests in other regions upstaged LAC. The greater size and stature of the U.S.—politically, economically and militarily—and the correspondingly larger scope of its responsibilities and commitments around the world mean that the region is unlikely to command a sustained high level of effort and resources from Washington. The serious current U.S. domestic economic situation reinforces the point. Second, and more importantly, there is no assurance that more effort or expenditure of resources by Washington is better for the U.S., the region, or individual countries in it. Nor should we conclude that offering economic in lieu of military assistance is

predictably more effective. There must be a better way for the U.S. to engage the region in order to more reliably and predictably achieve mutually beneficial and longer lasting results.

The purpose of this Strategy Research Project (SRP) is to propose how the U.S. can most efficaciously pursue its foreign policy and national security interests in concert with hemispheric interests in general and the interests of individual LAC states in particular. A retrospective look at some key historical anecdotes of U.S. relations in the region followed by a closer look at the current U.S.-Colombia relationship provide the basis from which to conduct a more enlightened approach. First this SRP focuses on the ability of the U.S. and another LAC country or group of countries to achieve a shared success in bridging issues. Both parties acknowledge the value of the bridging issues, that manifest themselves inside each country, and that those countries are willing to dedicate effort and resources to address. Second, this SRP focuses on the need to recognize and capitalize on the tremendously increased potential for mutually successful outcomes when LAC countries have political leaders whose vision for their country include clear areas of overlap with U.S. national interests.

At the high end of the region's importance to Washington, when the significant application of effort and resources by the U.S. had a pronounced impact on the region, in 1903 "[the country of] Panama was created by the U.S. to serve as host to the interoceanic route that it [the U.S.] proposed to build."<sup>1</sup> Thereafter, the U.S. controlled the Panama Canal Zone for over fifty years until it agreed to return the Zone to Panama in the 1977 Carter-Torrijos Treaties, whereby the U.S. relinquished full control in 1999. In the difficult domestic deliberations of negotiations prior to the U.S.' decision to

relinquish its control, a U.S. senator reiterated the famous remark of a predecessor in 1911 during deliberations to establish control of the Zone: “We stole it fair and square.”<sup>2</sup> Other examples of high-end U.S. involvement in LAC include orchestrating the covert use of a proxy military force for the regime change of a Soviet-influenced and left-leaning—though democratically elected—government in Guatemala in 1954; the overt use of its own military forces in Nicaragua from 1912-1933 and the Dominican Republic from 1916 to 1922 and again in 1965, in this last instance to forestall another Cuban-style revolution like Fidel Castro’s in 1959. The benefits to either or both parties from these interventions were arguably mixed.

A more recent high end example, this time focused on the economic realm, was how the U.S. government mustered the domestic political support necessary to ratify the 1993 North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with Canada and Mexico. Aside from the economic benefits accrued to all three countries, this initiative has provided Mexico’s current President Felipe Calderon the domestic political space necessary to cooperate more closely than ever before with the U.S. on counterdrug efforts. This unprecedented bilateral cooperation also comes as a result “of the \$1.4 billion [counterdrug] Mérida Initiative, which the State Department calls ‘a new paradigm’ of security cooperation..., aimed at helping Mexico confront cartels with training and high-tech assistance.”<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, since NAFTA has more closely bound the U.S. and Mexican economies, the current U.S. economic woes are likely to more negatively affect Mexico’s economy than those of other hemispheric countries.<sup>4</sup> Although LAC rarely tops the list of regions the U.S. finds most important to its foreign or national security interests, the U.S. has at times deeply and substantively engaged itself there.<sup>5</sup>

At the low end of importance to Washington, when little effort and resources were applied in the region for most of the nineteenth century until the 1959 Cuban revolution, “the United States had largely ignored Latin America, given it low priority, treated it with benign neglect, and employed an ‘economy of force.’”<sup>6</sup> While some in the region lamented a hands-off approach by Washington, others there found in it a cause célèbre, preferable to either overt meddling or military intervention. A specific example is the degree to which Brazil has long felt underappreciated by the U.S. For example, Brazil contributed of a division-sized Brazilian Expeditionary Force to the Allied war effort in Italy during the Second World War and sent peacekeepers under the banner of the Organization of American States to the Dominican Republic in 1965 and again to Haiti in 2004 under the United Nations. In this latest instance they continue to lead the effort.<sup>7</sup> However, the U.S. has scarcely acknowledged these ongoing contributions to U.S. and U.N. activities. Long feeling rebuffed, Brazil has aspired to recognition of its size, maturity, and importance at the regional and international level by, for instance, securing a permanent seat on the United National Security Council. Another recent example was Mexico’s bewilderment when the U.S. failed to follow through on professed intentions to reconcile important bilateral differences on migration early in the presidencies of Vicente Fox and George W. Bush.

So U.S. relationships with LAC have varied along a sliding scale. Examples closer to the middle of that scale were the 1945 Act of Chapultepec and the 1947 Rio Pact. These compromises were designed as military hemispheric defensive measures to preclude meddling from any extra-regional powers. On their face, they represented a multilateral approach instead of a U.S.-driven, Monroe Doctrine style, unilateral one.

But, as the text of the Act of Chapultepec below makes clear, the non-U.S. signatories were also concerned with preventing direct U.S. intervention, or meddling, in their countries:

The security and solidarity of the Continent are affected to the same extent by an act of aggression against any of the American States by a non-American State, *as by an act of aggression of an American State* against one or more American States. [Italics added]<sup>8</sup>

Nothing in these defensive military agreements even approached the future effort that Washington would apply to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. An expert on the history of U.S. policy toward Latin America contrasted U.S. relations with France and Peru: “Peru is a Rio Treaty ally, which, as alliances go, is something of a charade; France is a NATO ally, which is a very serious alliance...Peru hasn’t mattered much in international relations; France has mattered a lot.”<sup>9</sup> And as future events would show, the U.S. and other signatories interpreted the Act of Chapultepec and the Rio Pact differently regarding warrants for intervention.

### Bridging Issues

There are myriad lenses through which to view how and why the U.S. has conducted its inter-American relations the way it has. They include the degree to which it perceives that national security, ideology, economic, or domestic interests trump the others, or how long-seated intraregional differences—path dependence—make us fundamentally incompatible. Looking first through the national security lens, we will assess what is at stake in terms of the risk U.S.-LAC relations present to the national interest, from a survival interest or vital interest to merely important or even peripheral ones. It is true that the closest war zone to the U.S. is in LAC—Colombia. The Cubans and Haitians have at times reminded us that they are only a short, if treacherous, boat

lift or raft ride from U.S. shores. But in the midst of the Global War on Terror (GWOT), without either weapons of mass destruction (WMD) or any overt direct threat from international terrorist organizations, viewed through this lens, U.S.-LAC relations will likely fail to merit any significant efforts to change or improve them.

Another lens reveals a more purely ideological breakdown along the lines of how, during the Cold War, communism was often the sole determinant of how much or how little the U.S. would involve itself with another country. But the Cold War and the era when ideology frequently eclipsed other kinds of threats, especially economic, appear over. Worldwide population growth impels the need to produce more of what is already being consumed, and the profit motive of corporations drives discoveries of new ways to appeal to the expanding needs and desires of the growing number of consumers. Both of these factors have worked to put the ideological cart behind the economic horse. Trade between the U.S. and the People's Republic of China (PRC) continued even after the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre. And in perhaps the most poignant reminder yet of the increased relative importance of economics to ideology, remember that even shortly after the horrendous ideologically based 9/11 attacks, former President Bush "asked Americans to go shopping, ... [which] they did—bringing an economy shattered by the attacks back to full speed within a few years."<sup>10</sup> Also, our need for oil accounts, I suppose, for our "overlooking" Saudis' active role in the 9/11 attacks.

Another lens through which to view foreign relations recently appeared in a *New York Times* article titled "[U.S. Secretary of the Treasury Henry M.] Paulson's China Trip Leaves Big Issues Unresolved." The article assessed the potential value of the Secretary's December 2008 trip to the Beijing, and by extension the bilateral

relationship, as about “big ideas” or “deliverables,” either a theoretical and principled approach or a pragmatic and practical one.<sup>11</sup> The same distinction was presented differently by a senior level official during a recent U.S. Army War College visit, referring to the deep and close fights, respectively:<sup>12</sup> While the U.S. would of course like to see things go its way internationally, it is certainly unrealistic to expect to take away significant and lasting deliverables from every high-level meeting. What is more, when the U.S. manages to get its way at every turn and brings home deliverables in every close fight, as the next section will make clear, ironically can lead to a suboptimal outcome for both sides. Continued U.S. success in the global market means to some that the U.S. is getting something by forcing the other side to accept a deal, or appealing to only a very small subset of the other side, like a particular leader and his small circle of cronies.

Between Washington and LAC, when the big ideas side of that breakdown has manifested itself—generally from the U.S’ perspective, it has been with the U.S. assumption that the region is culturally deficient and economically and politically inferior to the liberal democratic culture of the U.S. In a small exception that proves the rule, after the War of 1812, President John Q. Adams “ridiculed the Abbé Correia’s [the Portuguese-Brazilian Minister to the U.S.] suggestion that [both countries] create an ‘American system’ to halt privateering.” According to President Adams, the U.S. alone constituted the whole of the American system without interference or even input from other countries.<sup>13</sup> Current adherents to this view conclude that LAC is in dire need of massive social reengineering to be able to interact constructively on any level with the U.S. Economically, according to one in this camp, “intimate trade relationships are risky

in the absence of shared values and institutions.”<sup>14</sup> Such thinking ought to keep inter-American “true partnership” right where the title of Lawrence E. Harrison’s book—entitled *The Pan-American Dream: Do Latin America’s Cultural Values Discourage True Partnership with the United States and Canada?*—places it, a “dream.”<sup>15</sup>

While there are obvious cultural differences between the U.S. and its southern neighbors, some are more profound than others. For example, in terms of the path dependency lens, Iberian conquest in LAC at the hand of the Iberians was significantly different than colonization in North America from northern Europeans, with Iberian manifestations visible even today. The U.S. founding fathers cut many grooves, leaving solid institutions. Simultaneously, their cacique and caudillo counterparts in LAC left their countries bogged down in ruts of weak and nonexistent institutions. But allowing these or other differences to forestall efforts to address them means that any U.S. interests at stake there can simply linger unaddressed. Furthermore, to pretend that the U.S. should be willing or able to devote the resources necessary to ram through such obstacles is unrealistic, given the relative unimportance of U.S.-LAC issues with respect to more urgent domestic problems or to winning the GWOT and preventing the proliferation and use of WMD. It is perhaps more useful to see cultural differences as factors for both sides to consider and then perhaps to encourage them to change how they deal with the other to effect a more mutually agreeable outcome.

These adjustments are necessary for two reasons. First, if “past is prologue,” like William Shakespeare wrote and historians are fond of reminding us, and even though countries may have a significant, if short-term, overlap in policy goals, there is not likely ever to be a one-to-one correspondence between the national agendas and interests of



any two of them.<sup>16</sup> This is certainly true between the U.S. and LAC considering the stark cultural contrasts and different outlooks that the differences in size and wealth engender. Second, there are relevant and important bridging issues that link the U.S. and the region, even if they will have to be resolved at echelons below the National Security Council or the deputies committee—and without considerable application of scarce and expensive resources.

One Latin America expert calls these “front-burner issues,” such as “drugs, immigration, trade, terrorism, pollution, the environment, AIDs, global warming, weapons proliferation, refugees, hunger, and so on.”<sup>17</sup> A recent *New York Times* editorial seeking to encourage improved inter-American relations with President Obama’s administration used a shorter, but similar, list of “important topics, including drug trafficking, energy policy, economic integration and immigration.”<sup>18</sup> While it is obvious that LAC is not the most important region for some of these issues, especially like Africa is to AIDs and hunger or the Middle East is to weapons proliferation and terrorism, it should come as little surprise that each of these bridging issues plays out in some manner in the region. Hunger along with environmental degradation produces refugees from other regions; they might attempt to illegally immigrate through LAC to get to the U.S. Money laundering and other forms of financing for international terrorist groups routinely takes place in various parts of the region. So even though neither of the above lists is comprehensive, we can see that successfully addressing some of the most pressing U.S. concerns requires that they be addressed in some manner between Washington and LAC capitals.

As for other issues on these lists—like drugs, trade or the environment—few would argue against the notion that LAC is the principal party or is more important than other regional players in resolving the issues. For instance, the Andean countries of South America produce all of the coca-based illicit drugs consumed in the U.S. and Europe. Trade issues like NAFTA, Venezuela's oil sales, or other trade agreements are important to the U.S.' and the region's economies. The negative environmental impact coupled with the increasing frequency of the El Niño effect along South America's Pacific coast and in the southwest U.S. is significant and expensive to deal with. Similarly, according to a recently released World Bank report, the correlation of changes in heat, dryness and rainfall throughout the region will likely to lead to massive reductions in farm revenue, reduced GDP, increased rural poverty and increases in endemic diseases like malaria and dengue fever.<sup>19</sup> Surely the U.S. stands to be negatively impacted by the first order and subsequent order effects of these conditions taking place so close to its own borders.

Other bridging issues include cooperation in dealing with cross-border crime, humanitarian disasters like hurricanes or earthquakes, or the political stability of certain countries, from failed states like Haiti to unstable or increasingly authoritarian ones like Venezuela, Ecuador, and Bolivia. The essential point is that even without risk of GWOT enemies launching direct attacks from LAC or those countries producing or containing WMD, there are many reasons why LAC is important to the U.S. But since many of these bridging issues are old and have already been addressed, the fact that so many of them remain unresolved or poorly addressed indicates that merely "having issues" is insufficient.

### Bridging Issues to Where?

Long wars often provide a context for prolonged interaction between the U.S. and other regions or countries; they serve as extended bridging issues. The most prominent long war that connected the U.S. and LAC was the Cold War. Vehement anti-communism drove many of the programs and policies the U.S. conducted in LAC for most of the second half of the twentieth century. Frequently, however, these programs and policies had both immediate and long-lasting negative consequences in the countries where they were implemented. Its anti-communist policies damaged U.S. credibility and its reputation in the target country and throughout the region. By considering some historical examples of where mutually beneficial and long-lasting results were not achieved, we can uncover the elements that contributed to such poor outcomes.

During a 1955 visit to Guatemala by then Vice President Richard M. Nixon, he described the situation there as “the first instance in history where a Communist government has been replaced by a free one.”<sup>20</sup> Despite Nixon’s euphoria, high-end U.S. Cold War policy in LAC was not off to a good start. The installed leader, Castillo Armas, was the first in a long line of brutal Guatemalan dictators, part of a chain of events the U.S. set in motion. In the Dominican Republic, the dictator Rafael Trujillo’s assumption of power in 1930 followed a U.S. military occupation from 1916-22 that provided him a power base from which to operate, using the National Guard as his weapon of choice. Although Trujillo’s rule started before the Cold War, his ability to provide stability and take a strong anti-communist stance despite having been “one of the most ruthless dictators in the hemisphere,” prompted the U.S. to at least tolerate his “rule [of] the nation without mercy” until his death in 1961.<sup>21</sup> The U.S. overt intervention

there in 1965 to stem what had become endemic unrest only partially ameliorated the U.S. responsibility for having helped create and sustain the Trujillo dynasty. Similarly in Nicaragua, the U.S. backed the Somoza dynastic dictatorship since Anastasio Somoza's assumption of power in 1937. As with the Dominican Republic example, the U.S.-created National Guard was the weapon he used to propel him to and sustain him in power. This "ambitious and ruthless tyrant" and his no less vile sons ruled with impunity and the collaboration of the U.S. government until 1979, which then opened the sad chapter of the Sandinista Revolution and the U.S.-led Contra War.<sup>22</sup>

There are other less well-known examples of the U.S. directly involving itself in the imposition or exclusion from power of leaders in LAC, to the detriment of itself and the target countries. In Cuba in the late 1920s and early 1930s, it was easy for locals and the U.S. to be displeased with President Gerardo Machado. According to the memoirs of Sumner Welles, the U.S. Ambassador there in 1933, Machado's administration and the methods it used were comparable to those the Nazi Gestapo would use during Germany's Third Reich.<sup>23</sup> While Welles was successful in helping unseat Machado by acting upon this negative assessment, the outcome of the chaos that ensued resulted in another unsavory and brutal dictator coming to power, Fulgencio Batista. The U.S., however, initially saw in Batista someone who would serve its interests. "The consummate expression of this policy came in 1955, when Vice President Nixon offered a toast to Batista and compared him with Abraham Lincoln."<sup>24</sup> Like Sumner Welles before him, in a later case U.S. Ambassador to Argentina Spruille Braden overlaid the Nazi template on the military junta in power at the end of the Second World War in 1946.<sup>25</sup> But this time his strong efforts to unseat Juan Peron

backfired. Peron would go on to rule Argentina for many years in three different administrations. Argentina has still not recovered from some of the psychological and economic damage he caused.

Defying short-term or decisive solutions, the GWOT and the War on Drugs are two more long wars being waged in LAC. Several factors, if taken to heart in Washington as well as in LAC capitals, are likely to lead to healthier and more productive inter-American relations. First, if the U.S. can avoid offering LAC overly simplistic 'take it or leave it' or 'you're either for us or against us' options for combating terrorists and drugs, it may likely find even more willingness to cooperate, even if such cooperation takes a different form than the U.S. may have originally envisioned. One Latin America observer believes that such efforts may actually be counterproductive. "One of the great ironies in life is that the harder one tries to lead, the less likely that others will follow."<sup>26</sup> As an example of another approach that works, Europe is having some success in defending itself from international terrorism by combining first-rate intelligence and police work, without involving their militaries. LAC countries could vitally support a police and intelligence based counterterrorism program. We should always expect differences in how two states view problems and pursue their solutions.

Second, as we have seen elsewhere in the world, now and in the past, calamitous consequences can result when the U.S. puts into power or prolongs the rule of a leader for another country or, conversely, tries to forestall someone from coming to power. Even if it appears Washington may have gotten this right in the short term, cases are rare when either both countries benefitted or when benefits were enduring. More common is a foreign leader quickly stripped of domestic legitimacy who then feels

compelled to rule heavy-handedly in collusion with a relatively small but powerful subset of his country's population and U.S. support. Obviously this is out of sync with long-term U.S. foreign policy goals and interests. Barring an exceptional crisis, the U.S. must try to muster the patience to allow democratic countries to produce their own leaders. While this could be frustrating for U.S. policymakers, which LAC countries or others have not been deeply frustrated one or more times with a particular leader of the U.S.?

Third, no state should expect another to care more than it does about solving a problem that affects it more than it affects the other(s). From the Andean countries' perspective, it is hardly reasonable for the U.S. to expect them to do the heavy lifting by implementing harsh measures to reduce drug trafficking while the U.S. does relatively little to reduce or eliminate the equally, if not more culpable demand problem. Even if Washington expects, say, that more than half of the effort applied to the drug problem should take place between the Andes and U.S. shores, it must make some demonstrable effort at home to reduce demand. The most any country should expect from another is for the other state to share its sense of urgency to resolve a crisis or problem, not supplant it. Brazil and Colombia come to mind: they contributed armed forces to the Allied effort in the Second World War and the U.N. effort in the Korean War, respectively. In both instances the U.S. had more at stake than either Brazil or Colombia, but they nonetheless shared its sense of urgency to a considerable degree.

Last, when possible, try to not become too narrowly focused on issues. Even when an issue appears very simple, ignoring its potential linkages to other issues and the 'law of unintended consequences' can result in more harm than good. According to the former U.S. Ambassador to Mexico, Tony Garza, with respect to the proposal to

build a wall along all or parts of the U.S. southern border in order to enhance border security, “You’re not really addressing the question of border security at all if all you are talking about is building walls...You have to look at comprehensive immigration reform.”<sup>27</sup> Robert Killibrew’s recent *Armed Forces Journal* article elaborates on what “comprehensive” means in the context of immigration: “Immigration reform is an excellent example of a national domestic issue intrinsically involved in international gang culture that must be addressed.” Long-term solutions include “prison reform...education, [and] work force development.”<sup>28</sup> It is indeed useful to account for the ways that issues are connected. But delving deeply into problems can reveal unsettling solutions.

After so many negative examples, it is fortunate that history and current events combine in U.S.-Colombia relations to provide a positive illustration of how mutually productive and beneficial inter-American relations can be. Though they remain imperfect, those relations have been mutually beneficial and increasingly strong for over a decade. Despite the exhortation of one speaker at a recent U.S. Army War College Africa symposium that “We [the U.S.] should not back individual leaders” in other countries, history and current events provide contrary examples.<sup>29</sup> Some foreign leaders, unlike those mentioned above, are clearly worth backing. Next we will see a potential policy change that could keep this relationship improving and maybe even expanding.

### Colombia and the United States, a Case Study

*I. Discussion.* While not without controversy, few would argue that Plan Colombia has not been successful in fixing the most pressing shared security concerns

of the U.S. and Colombia. These concerns include strengthening democracy and state institutions in Colombia by reducing or eliminating illicit drug trafficking and the influence of terrorists. The policy issue at this juncture is whether, given the degree of success achieved to date with the Plan, the U.S. should 1) ramp down its efforts and end funding; 2) continue to support similar spending priorities and the same level of funding; or, 3) increase its support and efforts by expanding military efforts and negotiating a bilateral free trade agreement.

*II. Background.* When Plan Colombia was developed just over a decade ago, Colombia was seen by many as a failing state that could be taken over by illegal drug cartels. The bilateral relationship during the President Ernesto Samper administration was strained to say the least. With Samper's successor, President Andres Pastrana, the bilateral relationship began to improve. From Colombia's perspective, the Plan was intended to provide a comprehensive solution to the country's most pressing problem of multiple active insurgencies and illegal counterinsurgencies by incorporating all the elements of national power. For Washington, however, initially the specific problem was the illicit drugs coming from Colombia. Aside from general agreement in both capitals that strengthening Colombian democracy and state institutions was worthwhile and important, both sides came to a more concrete shared focus when the problem was recognized as the illicit drug/terror nexus. U.S. funding, by a factor of four, has focused on Colombian security forces and against the narcoterrorists, leaving less for non-military programs.<sup>30</sup> Attempting to address this imbalance, "The Senate made a significant attempt in 2005 to re-balance the Colombia aid package...by placing a cap on military and police aid and raising the floor on economic assistance."<sup>31</sup>



Current President Alvaro Uribe, who is nearing the end of his second term—the maximum the Constitution currently allows, remains wildly popular because of the improved security the Plan has brought about as well as the ensuing relative economic stability. Illicit drugs, however, continue to flow out of Colombia to the U.S., and some of Colombia's neighbors espouse increasingly anti-U.S. views and constitute potentially destabilizing threats to the region. Furthermore, serious misdeeds in late October 2008 by high level military officers, while starkly contrasting with some spectacular recent successes against the FARC, indicate that Colombia's democracy is not as mature as it could be.<sup>32</sup>

*III. Options.* Assessing how successful Plan Colombia has been to date is fundamental to the U.S. decision on foreign aid: Should the U.S. invest Plan Colombia dollars elsewhere? Or should the U.S. maintain its current investment in Plan Colombia? Or should the U.S. comprehensively expand the economic and military components of Plan Colombia and increase its funding accordingly?

*Option 1: Ramp Down/Declare Victory and Take Foreign Aid Money Elsewhere.*

1. Feasibility: This is feasible for two reasons. First, given the acute and unresolved financial crisis in the U.S. and world economy, we can expect more intense scrutiny by lawmakers of where, to what degree, and even whether foreign aid dollars should be spent. Second, the security situation inside Colombia has undeniably improved significantly since the U.S. nearly tripled its spending in Colombia in 1999.<sup>33</sup> Colombians are generally free to safely move about the country. Colombia's diversified economy appears relatively stable. From this perspective, the Plan could be viewed as a qualified foreign policy success for the U.S.

2. Acceptability: This option is unacceptable because Colombia's role in the illicit drug trade has not been substantially curtailed. Despite successive efforts to disrupt it, the trade's debilitating effects are still being felt and would become more pronounced if the U.S. shortsightedly and prematurely ended its involvement with Plan Colombia. Without U.S. funding, Colombia would be unlikely to conduct counterdrug operations with the current level of intensity. It is also unacceptable to forsake, or appear to forsake, a stalwart ally in the Wars on Drugs and Terror when Colombia is now surrounded by an anti-U.S. and expansionist Venezuela and two likeminded states, Bolivia and Ecuador. While Colombia's battle-hardened and highly proficient security forces could likely deter or defeat military aggression from its neighbors now, Venezuela's ongoing petroleum funded build-up with Russian military hardware begins to change that equation.

3. Suitability: The U.S. professes that the military contribution to problem solving at the state level is to create a space, an opening, for the other elements of national power to be able to take root and later flourish. While such an opening exists in Colombia today and the state is on increasingly firm footing, the illicit drug trade continues to threaten gains made. Further progress is likely, given continued support.

4. Risk: Two first-order and short-sighted effects of this option are good: The U.S. could free up some, albeit limited, scarce monies to spend elsewhere and could point to a partially successful limited and mutually agreed upon foreign intervention, always a delicate task for the U.S. in Latin America. Recall that as late as 2005 "Colombia, by a wide margin, [was] the world's largest military aid recipient outside the Middle East."<sup>34</sup> Showing "restraint and reassurance" could be generally well received in the region,

though not likely by Colombia.<sup>35</sup> The second order, longer-term and unintended consequences of this option are riskier. Continuing illicit drug flows are a malign influence on fragile democratic institutions in states they touch, breeding crime and instability. Additionally, recent firings of multiple high-level Colombian military officers based upon reports of human rights atrocities offer a distressing reminder that even the military goals of Plan Colombia have not been fully realized.<sup>36</sup> Another potentially serious third order effect is to leave an expansionist Venezuela less in check and allow two Venezuelan cronies, Bolivia and Ecuador, to surround Colombia. This risk, however, could be mitigated if other responsible and mature states in the region, such as Brazil, Mexico or Chile, together with the Organization of American States, step up to support Colombia diplomatically to fill the void left if Plan Colombia funding dries up.

*Option 2: More of the Same*

1. Feasibility: Barring the need to drastically reduce U.S. foreign aid spending in the Latin America, where there is relatively little to begin with, it is feasible for the U.S. to continue to fund the Plan at similar levels. Furthermore, since counterdrug cooperation with Bolivia and Ecuador in the context of the \$800m Andean Ridge Initiative is dwindling, closing this program may free up more money to spend in Colombia.<sup>37</sup>

2. Acceptability: The White House and Congress, under both political parties, have supported Plan Colombia. At the same time, some have never lost their skepticism regarding the ability of Colombia's security forces, particularly the military (as opposed to the police), to be able to execute the plan with due regard for human rights. So, since Colombia is making progress but still has some serious shortcomings with respect to

illicit drug control and human rights, the U.S. could justifiably continue its funding of Plan Colombia. Since combating the spillover effects of narcotrafficking remains a serious challenge continued funding is acceptable. An example of positive spillover from strong U.S./Colombian collaboration is Mexico, where the government is working hard with the U.S. and its President Calderón is accepting great risk to fight the transit and delivery of illicit drugs to the U.S.<sup>38</sup> Acceptability is reduced, however, if U.S. funding priorities fail to account for the successes of the security forces and the validity of funding the economic element of national power.

3. Suitability: Continuing funding and maintaining essentially the same funding priorities would further develop a security force capability and continue to provide crop spraying apparatus that helped stabilize Colombia internally. These assets forced illicit drug traffickers to change their modus operandi and increased their operating costs, but without reducing the amount of cocaine available in the U.S. This option keeps pressure on the illicit drug trade and helps protect source and transit countries more than doing nothing would.

4. Risk: The main risk of this option is the perception that if after ten years of focus on the security forces we can say only that we need more of the same. If we do not proceed from a military focus to applications of the other elements of national power, something has gone wrong. It could be interpreted that the U.S. has been supplanting instead of sharing Colombia's sense of urgency to solve problems. A second, and perhaps omnipresent risk of the "do the same thing" option, is complacency. Just because an increasing number of people, organizations and companies are comfortable with having implemented Plan Colombia for a decade—this

does not mean that they will continue to reap the heretofore benefits. By shaking up the executors of Plan Colombia with either less or more money or forcing them to execute modified or different programs, we keep them on their toes and the illicit drug traffickers on their heels.

*Option 3: Ramp Up*

1. Feasibility: This option is feasible for two reasons. First, it is important for the U.S. to be true in deed to what it professes in words. Despite Europeans' refusal to invest in the non-military aspects of Plan Colombia, the U.S. never significantly adjusted the focus of its spending away from the security forces and coca crop eradication. By acknowledging that Colombia's security forces have afforded its government the space needed to pursue demobilization of the Paramilitaries and peace talks with the ELN, offering Colombia the opportunity to benefit from a bilateral free trade agreement with the U.S. would enhance the government's ability to appeal to its citizenry and consolidate a deeper and more secure democracy. Second, the problem set has changed. Democracy and regional stability are no longer being adversely affected by only the drug/terror nexus. Over the course of the past decade, Colombia's southern neighbors have gone from seeking to support counterdrug operations through the Andean Regional Initiative to now falling more deeply under the spell of President Chavez' anti-Americanism and his destabilizing expansionist aspirations.

2. Acceptability: The acceptability of this option resides in its recognition of the long-term utility of offering comprehensive, not just military, solutions to failing states. Furthermore, disruptive counterdrug operations have not reduced the strong demand for illicit drugs in the U.S., and further systematic disenfranchisement of many Colombians

from the licit economy still requires significant attention. The more advanced and difficult part of strengthening democracy and nurturing capitalism is to be able to appeal to the peoples' sense of a legal and constructive way forward, not just to avoid the pain inflicted by the security forces from involvement in the illicit drug trade.

The potential unacceptability of this problem could come from focusing narrowly on the fact that labor leaders in Colombia are sometimes murdered while the perpetrators go unfound or unpunished. Obviously, this is never acceptable. If the situation were bad and getting worse, this might constitute grounds for unacceptability. But that is not the case. If, on the other hand, Colombia's ability to reduce or eliminate such occurrences is acknowledged and improving, it could simply be seen as a reason for Colombia, perhaps with additional U.S. support, to work on judicial system reform.

3. Suitability: Smartly applying more resources to an important, even vital, problem already headed in a positive direction is clearly efficacious. Furthermore, it is likely to catalyze the process altogether to the point where the U.S. can focus its resources and energies on more dire problems. Further, this option offers the additional benefit of starving the Venezuelan President's fiery Bolivarian rhetoric of oxygen by providing economic carrots instead of security sticks in Latin America.

4. Risk: One risk is the omnipresent U.S. domestic political challenge of approving a bilateral free trade agreement. Another is that it takes the rest of Latin America, and especially the larger countries, off the hook in terms of exercising a degree of responsibility and commitment to solving a problem set we all share. Since every Latin American country is at least a source, a transit zone, or a consumer of the

illicit drug trade, they might forget that this is not simply a bilateral U.S./Colombian problem.

*IV. Recommendation.* Option 3. The U.S. can ill afford a penny wise/pound foolish Plan Colombia policy. Our national interest is best served by reinforcing and broadening this ongoing, but incomplete, success. The goal here, according to the U.S. State Department, is achieved by “accelerating economic growth and ensuring that the [Colombian] government provides social services to all its citizens.”<sup>39</sup> While the insurgent part of the problem for Colombia appears well in hand, the illicit drug part of the problem, and its spillover effects, remain. Furthermore, the threats to regional stability now come from more than just spillover of the illicit drug trade: Threats to the region’s stability now include the destabilizing influence of President Chavez’ Pan-American Bolivarian socialist aspirations. Lastly, the U.S. should not underestimate the value of a steady ally, champion of democracy and free markets, and a fighter against narcoterrorists.

## Conclusion

At the beginning of this SRP, history showcased repeated failures in inter-American relations. Now from the Colombia/U.S. case study, and to some degree from the increasingly respectful and mutually beneficial relationship between Mexico and the U.S. could be replicated. This SRP has identified some of the hallmarks worth trying to replicate. One, the interests to be served should not merely accrue to one state and a very small subset of the other, like an excessively malleable president and his small inner circle. Mutuality of interests arises when states share common visions for where they want to go and where they want to go together with other states, such as a

“proposal put forward by the Guatemalan government...to establish a regional ‘rapid reaction force’” with the U.S. and its Central American neighbors to address gang related problems and other transnational threats that are exceeding the abilities of one state’s security forces to control.<sup>40</sup> It is also crucial that democracies choose their own leaders and are comfortable with their leaders’ patriotism and domestic commitments before they reach out to neighbors. And when a bilateral or multilateral policy—both better than a unilateral one—transcends presidential administrations in one or both countries, this is another clear sign of a healthy relationship. This is the case in both countries with respect to Plan Colombia, though not yet with the Mérida Initiative in Mexico—the Initiative and President Calderon’s administration are relatively new. The need for a healthy respect for and appreciation of national differences should not be denied. In fact, one of the aspects of Ambassador Garza’s tenure while serving in Mexico that was most respected and appreciated by the host government was that the “differences [he did not shy away from] helped the [bilateral] relationship mature...both governments evolve[d] from a dynamic of finger-pointing to one of recognizing a shared responsibility.”<sup>41</sup>

Further, states need to recognize or be open to the possibility that they have important overlapping interests. In the case of Colombia and the U.S., both have long recognized that there is no useful future in failing to address both the supply and demand sides of the illicit drug industry. Because of these shared national concerns, even a complex international legal issue like extradition of drug traffickers from Colombia to the U.S. has proceeded without serious controversy for many years. While the U.S. initially focused its efforts in Colombia against drugs, a more holistic



assessment of the situation enabled the two countries to acknowledge another shared threat, the terrorist insurgents who are closely linked to drugs. This developing relationship also highlights the importance of political leaders at the highest levels, diplomats and Foreign Area Officers, trying to link issues. Although drug cartels, narcoterrorists, and others on the wrong side of right will find nothing soft when state-to-state relations can get to this level, at the inter-governmental and inter-American level, this is soft power. And it “is all about getting others to do things they see as being consistent with their own values and interests.”<sup>42</sup>

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Mark Falcoff, *Panama's Canal: What Happens When the United States Gives a Small Country What It Wants* (Washington, D.C: the AEI Press, 1998), 2.

<sup>2</sup> “Ceding the Canal—Slowly,” *Time*, August 22, 1977. Theodore Roosevelt: Quotes, Sayings and Aphorisms, <http://www.theodore-roosevelt.com/trquotes.html> (accessed December 13, 2008). According to my research, the quote “We stole it [the Canal Zone] fair and square” is often, but falsely, attributed to President Teddy Roosevelt. It was actually a very loose paraphrasing by a U.S. Senator at that time of the following words attributed to the President, “I took the canal zone [sic] and let Congress debate, and while the debate goes on the canal does also.”

<sup>3</sup> Alfredo Corchado, “Outgoing U.S. ambassador to Mexico lashes out on drug war,” *Dallas Morning News*, November 28, 2008.

<sup>4</sup> “Latin America: Preparing for tougher times,” *The Economist*, December 13, 2008, 45.

<sup>5</sup> One historical example in which LAC topped the list of important international concerns to the U.S. was during the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. But that is almost by accident of geography as the negotiations to resolve the crisis had very little to do with Cuba's President Fidel Castro or anyone else in LAC, and almost everything to do with the Soviet Union and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev.

<sup>6</sup> Howard J. Wiarda, *The Soul of Latin America: The Cultural and Political Tradition* (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 2001), 238.

<sup>7</sup> Vernon A. Walters, *Silent Missions* (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1978), 138. In addition to an Army division, the Brazilian Expeditionary Force that took part in the Italy Campaign of the Second World War consisted of a fighter squadron and several naval ships. They fought successfully against the Germans and with distinction.

<sup>8</sup> Inter-American Reciprocal Assistance and Solidarity (Act of Chapultepec) in *Latin America and the United States: A Documentary History*, ed. Robert H. Holden and Eric Zolov (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000), 174.

<sup>9</sup> Lars Schoultz, *Beneath the United States: A History of U.S. Policy Toward Latin America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), xvii.

<sup>10</sup> Manav Tanneeru, "9/11 trauma persists five years later," *CNN*, September 11, 2006.

<sup>11</sup> Andrew Jacobs, "Paulson's China Trip Leaves Big Issues Unresolved," *New York Times*, December 5, 2008.

<sup>12</sup> Invited speaker, Class of 2009 lecture, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, December 2008.

<sup>13</sup> Schoultz, *Beneath the United States*, 10.

<sup>14</sup> Lawrence E. Harrison, *The Pan-American Dream: Do Latin America's Cultural Values Discourage True Partnership with the United States and Canada?* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), 3.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> William Shakespeare <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/w/williamsha109530.html> (accessed December 13, 2008).

<sup>17</sup> Wiarda, *Soul of Latin America*, 208.

<sup>18</sup> "About Latin America," *New York Times*, November 28, 2008.

<sup>19</sup> "Climate change in Latin America: The accidental environmentalists," *The Economist*, December 13, 2008, 48.

<sup>20</sup> Jacob G. Hornberger, "The Anti-democracy Foreign Policy: Guatemala," February 11, 2005, linked from The Future of Freedom Foundation, <http://www.fff.org/comment/com0502f.asp> (accessed December 14, 2008).

<sup>21</sup> Thomas E. Skidmore and Peter H. Smith, *Modern Latin America*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1997), 307.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 342.

<sup>23</sup> Sumner Welles, "1933 Mission to Havana" in *Latin America and the United States: A Documentary History*, ed. Robert H. Holden and Eric Zolov (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000), 143-6.

<sup>24</sup> Peter H. Smith, *Talons of the Eagle: Dynamics of U.S.-Latin American Relations*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000), 131.

<sup>25</sup> Spruille Braden, "the Blue Book on Argentina (Braden Report)," Ibid., 176-8.

<sup>26</sup> Joseph R. Núñez, "A 21<sup>st</sup> Century Security Architecture for the Americas: Multilateral Cooperation, Liberal Peace, and Soft Power," Strategic Studies Institute, 2002, 36.

<sup>27</sup> Corchado, "Outgoing U.S. ambassador."

<sup>28</sup> Robert Killbrew, "Terror at the Border," *Armed Forces Journal*, December 2008, 19.

<sup>29</sup> Invited speaker, Class of 2009 Africa Symposium, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, December 9, 2008.

<sup>30</sup> Lisa Haugaard, Adam Isaacson and Joy Olson, "Erasing the Lines: Trends in U.S. military programs in Latin America," Latin America Working Group Education Fund, Center for International Policy and Washington Office on Latin America, (December 2005): 16.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>32</sup> Simon Romero, "Colombia Lists Civilian Killings in Guerrilla Toll," *The New York Times*, 30 October 30, 2008.

<sup>33</sup> Haugaard, Isaacson and Olson, "Erasing the Lines," 18.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>35</sup> Núñez, vii.

<sup>36</sup> Simon Romero, "Colombia Lists Civilian Killings in Guerrilla Toll," *The New York Times*, October 30, 2008. According to this article, President Uribe fired three general officers and a number of other senior level officers for acts of omission or commission related to the kidnapping and murder of poor civilian men whose bodies were later passed off as dead terrorists. Later the Army Commander would resign over the issue and allegations of previous misdeeds as a brigade commander.

<sup>37</sup> Carlos Valdez, "Bolivian president suspends US anti-drug efforts," Associated Press, November 1, 2008. According to this article, Bolivian President Evo Morales indefinitely suspended U.S. anti-drug operations in his country as of November 1, 2008. He based the move on allegations of espionage and criminal meddling in Bolivia's political affairs by U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency agents. Judith A. Gentleman, "The Regional Security Crisis in the Andes: Patterns of State Response," Strategic Studies Institute, 2001, vi.

<sup>38</sup> Marc Lacey, "In Mexico Drug War, Sorting Good Guys From Bad," *New York Times*, November 2, 2008. According to this article, the pervasiveness of the illicit trade in Mexico is so extensive has made it extremely difficult to be able to discount the possibility of anyone from involvement with the traffickers. It crosses age, gender, socioeconomic and intelligence boundaries.

<sup>39</sup> United States Department of State, Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, *Common Values, Shared Interests: The United States and its Promise in the Western Hemisphere* (Washington, DC: [www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov))

<sup>40</sup> Haugaard, Isaacson and Olson, "Erasing the Lines," 8.

<sup>41</sup> Corchado, “Outgoing U.S. ambassador.”

<sup>42</sup> Núñez, 36.